

THE BAPTIST Record

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**ARE WE
THERE
YET?**

2010 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering®

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Missionaries hunker down in Rio slum

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil (BP) — A nearby explosion sent missionaries ducking for cover at a Thanksgiving celebration in Rio de Janeiro on Nov. 25. Unharmed, the International Mission Board (IMB) families watched as a dark plume of smoke rose 50 feet into the air from a bus burning on the next street.

A young man had thrown a homemade explosive device onto the bus before speeding away on a motorcycle.

Ironically, the explosion interrupted IMB missionary Eric Reese as he was urging fellow missionaries to take added safety precautions amid escalating violence in the city. "It was an intense moment," said Reese, a Georgia native. "Not just for me and my family but for all the missionaries that were there. It was pretty crazy."

Because Rio de Janeiro is hosting some of soccer's World Cup games in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, city officials are under pressure to create a more international environment for international visitors. Toward that end, Brazilian police invaded 13 gang-controlled favelas.

Gangs of drug dealers fought back, firing on police and burning cars and



JESUS TALK — Missionary Eric Reese (left) visits with friends who live in the City of God favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While a war between the government and drug gangs ahead of the 2016 Olympics rages on, many young people such as these are turning to the saving power of Jesus Christ. (AP photo)

buses in the streets. Reese has heard reports that gang leaders are even trying to involve slum residents in the violence by offering 200 Brazilian reals (\$116) to people who blow up cars and 500 reals (\$290) to people who blow up buses.

Complexo do Alemão, the second-largest favela in Rio, has been controlled by more than 500 machine gun-carrying drug dealers for the past 30 years. On Nov. 28, military forces joined the police to reclaim that community.

As gangs move out of Complexo do Alemão, Reese wants to move in with the Gospel. Home to thousands of people, Complexo do Alemão has only one Baptist mission congregation.

The removal of the gangs from Complexo do Alemão has given Christian evangelists more freedom to move through the neighborhood than they have had in three decades. "We need to get the Gospel in that place," Reese said.

Reese shared three specific requests for prayer as IMB missionaries continue to minister in Rio de Janeiro despite the danger:

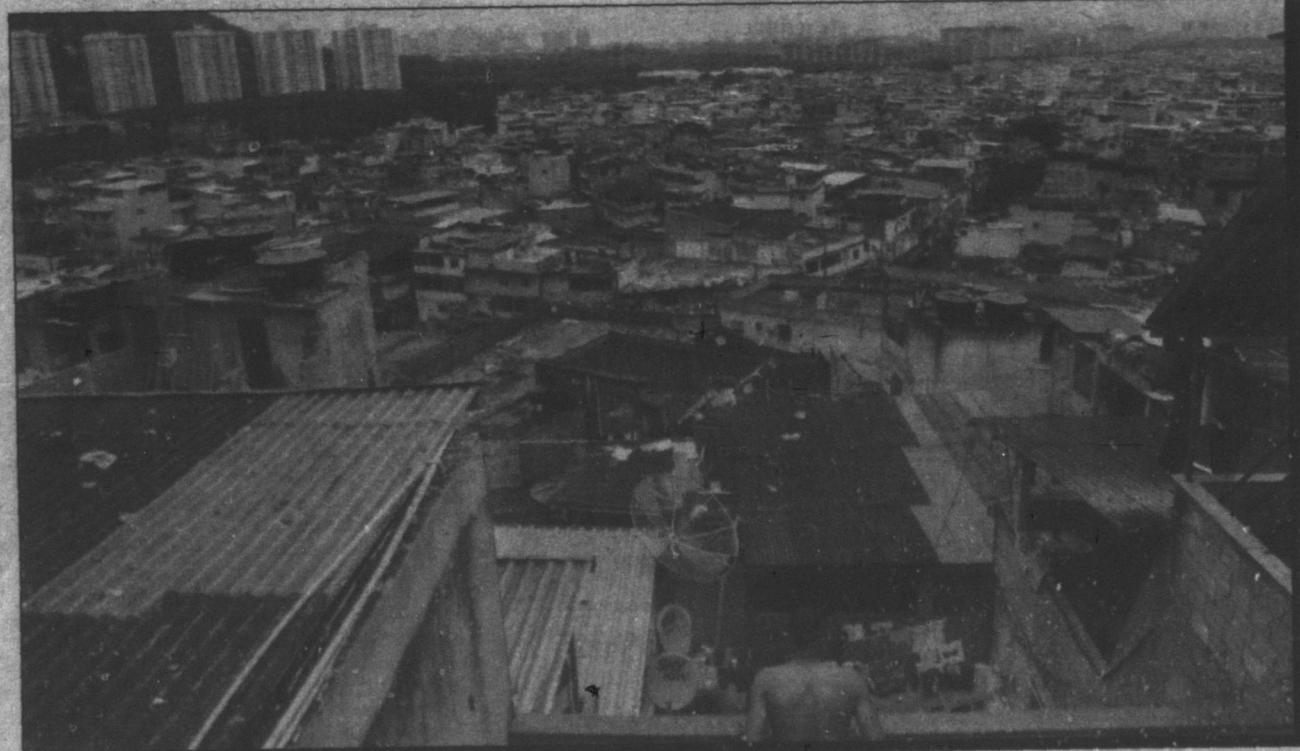
First, pray for God to calm the people in the city. Second, ask God to grant clarity of mind for missionaries as they decide how to proceed. Third, pray for the love of Jesus Christ to be shown to the favela residents.

"It's like Jesus said, 'I will make you fishermen of men.' We need to be fishermen of souls," Reese said, "because if we don't, what will happen?"

"Other drug dealers will come in. We need to take advantage and try to show people they can enjoy the peace of God and peace of mind."

For Reese's work in the slums of the city, Rio de Janeiro awarded him the 2008 Pedro Ernesto Medal of Merit, the highest honor conferred by the city to its citizens and foreigners who have rendered meritorious service.

Reese and his wife Ramona have served with the International Mission Board in South America for 11 years.



LONG WAY OFF — A local resident looks out from his rooftop porch over the Rio das Pedras favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro. The modern, high-rise buildings of the city can be seen in the distance. The city's slums have recently been the scene of extensive violence as the government attempts to pacify the restive neighborhoods prior to the 2016 Olympics. (BP photo)

Baptist vols rebuild church after tornado

By Tim Nicholas
Correspondent

More than 35 men from seven Mississippi Baptist Churches gathered the first weekend in December on a concrete slab in Holmes County to help rebuild Ebenezer Church, constituted in 1879 and blown away in an April 24 tornado.

Ebenezer Church member Wilburn White said the tornado struck at 12:40 p.m., and the church building "exploded from the inside and the roof came down." He said the tornado's destruction reached a mile and three-quarters across. One man nearby was killed.

"We're going to be doing something here every week-

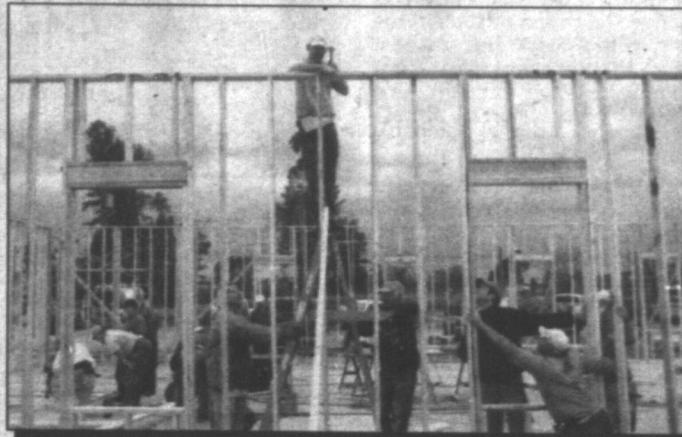
end till we get this thing built," White said.

Steven Edwards, an Ebenezer Church member and a civil engineer, said he and his wife finished their Christmas shopping last weekend "to free up our time from here on out."

The volunteers spent Dec. 4 building the wall frames and erecting them along the edges of the 6,500 square foot slab.

Danny Welch of Corinth Church, Magee, whose own church was also destroyed by a tornado in 2009, said "We were so blessed with people coming to help us and were honored to come and help."

The same mobile chapel that served Corinth Church as



RISING HIGH — Jim Goodman of Northside Church, Clinton, nails the top of a wall while other volunteers hold it in place at the construction site of Ebenezer Church in Holmes County. The church was destroyed by an April 24 tornado. Said Goodman of his volunteering to work for Ebenezer Church, and pointing to his heart, "Something down in here says go." (Photo by Tim Nicholas)

a temporary facility now serves Ebenezer Church. It is being loaned at no charge by Rick and Kim Barnes of Rick's Mobile Home Services in Pelahatchie. The company even moved it and set it up for the church.

Added Welch, a veteran by way of working on the rebuilding of his own church, "If you step out in faith, you'd better put your tennis shoes on. It's hard to put into words the blessing we're receiving."

Heath Johnson, pastor of Sulphur Springs Church, Sebastopol, said he read about the project in the Baptist Record. "We knew these were our kind of people and we wanted to help," he said.

Tommy Anthony, a member of Sulphur Springs Church,

said the church voted to give money to a general disaster fund, but "one guy said, 'Let's find a church that really needs it.'" The volunteers followed the money to Ebenezer Church.

Besides Ebenezer, Sulphur Springs; Corinth; Northside, Clinton; and First, Lexington, other churches providing volunteers last week were University Church, Starkville, and First Church, Leland.

For more information on the Ebenezer Church rebuilding, contact Pastor Billy Barron at (662) 834-2486, or Wilburn White at (662) 834-2428.

Nicholas is assistant professor of communication at Mississippi College in Clinton, and a former associate editor of The Baptist Record.



MEASURE TWICE — Danny Welch (left) of Corinth Church, Magee; John Emerich (center) of Ebenezer Church, Holmes County; and Johnny Allen of First Church, Lexington, look over plans for the 6,500 square foot building that will replace the Ebenezer Church structure destroyed by an April 24 tornado. (Photo by Tim Nicholas).

Music Leadership Training School now registering

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — January 10 begins the seventh of eight courses at seven locations in Mississippi sponsored by the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, in cooperation with the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

The seventh course, Survey of Church Music Resources, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:

First Church, Lyman — beginning January 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Louis White, teacher. (228) 832-2159; (228) 860-9616.

Northcrest Church, Meridian — beginning January 10 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Buddy McElroy, teacher. (601) 938-8668; (601) 679-1887.

First Church, Cleveland — beginning January 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Alan Berry, teacher. (662) 843-2701; (662) 402-5045.

Easthaven Church, Brookhaven — beginning January 17 (7-9 p.m.). Mark Hamilton, teacher. (601) 894-5848.

First Church, Starkville — beginning January 24 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Tom Jenkins, teacher. (662) 323-5633.

First Church, Booneville — beginning January 18 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). LuAnne Ford, teacher. (662) 728-6272.

Broadmoor Church, Madison — beginning January 24 (6:00-8:00 p.m.). Jimmy McCaleb, teacher. (601) 924-1233.

The eight courses are Song Leading; Worship Planning; Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch; Reading Music: Harmony/Melody; Hymnology; Music Administration/Staff Relations; Survey of Church Music Resources; and Class Voice.

The courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches. The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student

who completes the eight courses earns a certificate from the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$125.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is lim-

ited to one person per church.

For more information, contact the teachers at the telephone numbers listed above or contact Jimmy McCaleb at mcaleb@cabinvew.net. Mailing address: 515 Mississippi St., Jackson, MS 39201-1702. Telephone: (601) 292-3273 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 273.

Looking back

10 years ago

The executive committee of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board approves Ken Rhodes, missions director of Pearl River Association, as director of the MBCB Partnership Missions Department, and Roddy Reed as manager of Camp Garaywa in Clinton.

20 years ago

Jeremy Racey, 14-year-old son of Mike and Annette Racey, SBC missionaries to Chile, wins first place in the high jump event at the Chile national track and field competition. He is the grandson of Walter and Irma Racey and Clyde and Margaret Evans, all of Biloxi.

30 years ago

Mississippi Cooperative Program gifts for November are up 63% over the previous year's gifts, according to Chester Quarles, executive secretary-treasurer.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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VOL. 134

No. 48



YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.



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How do we understand Jesus?

Ponder for a moment just how implausible a concept such as the virgin birth of the Lord and Savior of the world — the embodiment of God Himself — must be to the purely scientific mind.

Who could possibly believe that a 1,000 year-old collection of 5,000 year-old verbal histories, the origins of which cannot be verified beyond a reasonable doubt, predicts the coming of the Messiah and then the fulfillment of that prophecy through the obscure, apparently illegitimate birth of a Jewish commoner in a backwater middle eastern town before there was even a decent calendar?

The biologist would explain that except for partheno-

genesis in a few lower plant and animal forms, no creature on earth even came into existence without the sexual union of a male and female of the same species.

The geneticist would ask, since every person must receive half of his DNA from his mother and half from his father, where was the Holy Spirit's DNA? The physician would posit that a child born in that era under such non-sterile, primitive conditions probably didn't survive for very long anyway.

The historian would assert the fact that no one is absolutely sure what time of year, or even the year itself, that such a child was born. The lawyer would demand that Mary submit to a physical examination to disprove her incredulous claim that she was pregnant and a virgin at the same time.

The atheist would argue that since there is no God, there could be no Son of God. The sleep researcher would attest that since dreams are nothing more than the brain randomly misfiring during unconscious rest, Joseph's vision meant nothing.



The abortionist would say... well, we already know what the abortionist would say.

No reasonable explanation can be found in science for the events that surround Jesus' birth, so why should we believe the Bible account?

In a word, faith.

The righteousness of the Gospel message is grounded in faith (Romans 1:17). We derive our faith by accepting that message (Romans 10:17), not by what we sense in the natural world (2 Corinthians 5:8). We must cover with faith everything we hold to be true (2 Chronicles 20:20). We know that with faith, nothing is impossible (Matthew 17:20; Mark 11:22).

Faith is understanding that we cannot understand everything (Hebrews 11:3), and yet we must still be willing to turn control of our lives over to God anyway (Psalm 97:10).

Faith is accepting with all your heart that God is who He says He is in His Word; that Jesus is the Son of God; that Jesus came into this world exactly as the Bible describes; and that Jesus is everything the Bible says He is.

At this special time of year in the Christian world, when Satan tries so hard to completely block Christ from Christmas, share your faith with someone who doesn't know Jesus as Lord and Savior. Believe it or not, there's probably a lost person living mere steps from your home. Show them by word and deed the true meaning of Christmas.

During this gift-giving season, give someone the gift of salvation that was so freely given to you. There will never be an earthly gift to match it.

From the staff of The Baptist Record — associate editor Tony Martin, circulation manager Brenda Quattlebaum, advertising coordinator Emily Jones, layout and design specialist Ben Ivey, web administrator Gordon Griffin, and myself — may you and your family have a joyous celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In other words, Merry Christmas!

Two more vice presidents announce exit from NAMB

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP) — Two long-time North American Mission Board (NAMB) vice presidents announced they will be taking the voluntary retirement offer NAMB has extended to all staff members age 54 and older who have at least five years of service.

Richard Harris, vice president of the S e n d i n g Missionaries Group and NAMB's interim president from August 2009 until mid-September 2010, and Harry Lewis, vice president of partnership missions and mobilization, will retire Dec. 31.

David Meacham, NAMB's vice president of associational strategies, retired Oct. 31.

Harris began work with the Home Mission Board (HMB), NAMB's predecessor, in 1981 in the area of mass evangelism. In addition to serving in pastorates in Kentucky and Texas, Harris served in more than 25 interim pastorates in the Atlanta area before and during his work with HMB/NAMB.

During his 29-year tenure with NAMB, Harris also served as national chairman of

four national evangelism emphases, including Good News America and Here's Hope. He served as vice president of church planting from 1997-2007.

In his early years, Harris said he sensed God's call to national ministry, which was fulfilled with his arrival at the Home Mission Board. There God used Him to help lead Southern Baptists in evangelism efforts, in providing language resources for cross-cultural church planting and in raising the standards for missionary applicants.

Harris will continue to work with NAMB in the entity's relationships with Baptist state conventions. He and his wife Nancy have two sons and five grandchildren. They plan to stay in the Atlanta area.

Lewis served as a pastor for nearly 20 years. During that time, he also filled several denominational leadership posts, including serving as a member of the SBC Executive Committee, president of the California Southern Baptist Convention, and on the board of trustees for Southwestern Seminary.



Harris



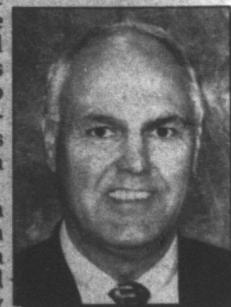
Lewis

He came to NAMB in 1997 to serve as a regional coordinator to develop missions and evangelism strategies for associations and state conventions in the Midwest and Canada. Lewis was promoted to NAMB's vice president of missions and mobilization in 2007.

Meacham began work with HMB/NAMB as a church planter and resort missionary in 1975, following five years as a pastor near Riverside, Ca. Before coming to NAMB in 2008, Meacham served as executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention and as an associational missionary in Las Vegas.

He joined NAMB following his tenure as director of New Orleans Seminary's Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Health.

Meacham and wife Sue will stay in Cumming, Ga., and serve in teaching and service roles at Castleberry Road Church, making frequent visits to their children and 12 grandchildren in California, Kansas, and Tennessee.



Meacham

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

NOVEMBER, 2010

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Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Eleven: Twenty-five

CHRISTMAS, OR "STRESS-MAS"

Let me begin by clearly stating that this is not an effort to change the name of *Christmas* to "*Stress-mas*," but merely recognition of what many people may be going through. As a matter of fact, you can almost see it taking place as the stress level rises and we get closer to Christmas Day. Everyone seems to feel it, though not everyone may know what it is. I was passing through a mall where kids were lined up with their parents for a visit with Santa Claus. You can imagine some of the kids were fearful. I watched two children, a brother and a sister about preschool age, who got in a fight. They were not getting along at all and here they were about to sit in Santa's lap. There were no punches exchanged but some words, emotions, and a couple of hand slaps were evident. Stress is always an issue in life but it seems to rise and spread during the holidays from Thanksgiving to New Years and in the middle there is Christmas.

Why would Christmas become Stress-mas? We are busy. There is just more to do around Christmas. They are not bad things, but they are time-consuming events that seem to be laden with anxiety. Just think about all of the things that happen.

Our churches have so many things that are taking place. There are musicals that involve so many people preparing and many others attending. There are parties, mission focuses, and efforts to care for those less fortunate and in need. Schools have all sorts of extracurricular activities, including the special Christmas programs and classes getting together. Businesses are in high gear, churning out an almost daily new sales pitch to lure people to come and purchase. Add to these all of us rushing around to go, do, and buy that increases the traffic. Everywhere you go there are clogged roads, full parking lots, and fender-benders that slow everything down to a snail's pace.

We are busy, but I am reminded that at the very first



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
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Christmas Mary and Joseph were busy. The long journey from Galilee down to the little town of Bethlehem had to be taxing and filled with uncertainty. This was not a planned vacation trip. Mary and Joseph were caught in the midst of demands from other people while at the same time, they were struggling with their own personal issues of a baby about to be born and how in the world would they meet all of the needs and responsibilities.

The second reason we may experience Stress-mas is because we are burdened. Two of the big burdens I see repeatedly are related to our losses and our loads in life. I am constantly aware of the loads that some people may be carrying as they experience their first Christmas without someone very special to them. It could be a friend or a family member that may have died during the year. Now with Christmas, their absence is felt profoundly. The loss may have taken place decades ago, but the wonder of Christmas and the blessings of memories gone by heighten the painful emotions.

By the same token, the loads we carry in life seem to be heavier as we come to Christmas. Financial loads, physical deficiencies, and struggles with disease all seem to weigh more during these days. Again, I remember Mary and Joseph as they traveled to Bethlehem dealing with registering for taxation purposes. The government had caused their problem. here was no way to get around it. Their situation had few or no options.

The third issue that leads to Stress-mas is our bloatedness. I am not referring to eating too

much, although it is the eating time of the year. Everywhere you go there are cookies, cakes, candy, and delicious meals. We all live on the edge of overloading our plates and packing on the pounds at Christmas. What I am referring to is the difficulty that we have with all of the surrounding sounds and sights that keep us from experiencing the awesome, amazing simplicity of a baby — God's appointed and anointed Savior of mankind lying in a manger. The angel announced, "And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12).

Christmas now has so many extraneous and often meaningless aspects now that it makes it very difficult to see Him. Just think about it: trees, lights, bells, parades, bows, paper, gifts, and cards. You get the picture! The other day I was listening to a radio station that was just playing Christmas music during the holidays.

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I thought that this was great. I listened and during one stretch of songs, I counted seven songs in a row and not one of them had anything to do with Jesus' coming. Yet these were Christmas songs. Again, I remembered Mary and Joseph as they arrived at their destination. While there was no place for them to stay, they found a stable and everything surrounding them and reaching up to heaven and around the globe was about God's Son coming into our world. For Mary and Joseph it was about that Babe, for shepherds, for Wise Men from the East, and for even governmental leaders the one singular, undeniable point of the moment was God had come to be among us.

Don't get bloated at Christmas with everything and all of the things that can be piled on top of you and miss Him. Do not let your children miss Him. Do not be swept away with all of the bloatedness of activities and scenery and miss the wonder of God's love touching your life. *This year, work at turning your Stress-mas into Christmas.*

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Go and Tell

Acts 8:1-40

By Becky Brown

I don't want to go to Heaven by myself. I want to take others along. Don't you? Our lesson titles for December exhort us to change our world by sharing the good news of Jesus from the manger to the cross through the empty tomb to eternity: Value What God Values, Go and Do, Focus on Jesus and Go and Tell.

This week, we study the book of Acts. Dr. Luke is believed to have authored the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts. In Luke, the gospel is presented. In Acts, the gospel is proclaimed. My favorite outline for Acts reads: Jesus goes up, the Holy Spirit comes down, the people go out. Peter has exchanged his fishing pole for a pulpit. The Apostles have done a little jail time for the sake of the gospel. The early church is

established and experiencing growing pains. Deacons are selected to assist the Apostles. Two of the most notable deacons are Stephen and Philip. Stephen is stoned to death, becoming the first martyr of the church. Philip answers God's call to preach. Saul, soon to be Paul, is on the prowl, destroying Christians. Persecution was flinging Christians around the known world. Like healthy seeds being planted in fertile ground, God was using them to bring forth a great harvest of souls.

Philip was preaching in the cities of Samaria, watching the Lord perform miracles. God sent an angel to redirect Philip to the desert road leading down from Jerusalem to Gaza. I've been to that spot and it is still deserted. Little did Philip



Brown

know that God was sending him downhill from a great revival to lead one man uphill to Christ. Never forget that God loves every...ONE. There was a man in a chariot, journeying home after a time of worship in the temple in Jerusalem. To this day,

his name is unknown, but his spiritual condition was known to God. He is identified as the Eunuch from Ethiopia (modern Sudan). A "eunuch" is one who has been imasculated. Eunuchs were employed to manage harems and finances. This man was treasurer for the Queen of Ethiopia. Luke calls him an "official." He also was officially lost, but sincerely searching for the truth. Because of his condition, he knew that he would have no descendants. He felt like he had no future or hope. God sent Philip to share hope.

As Philip joined the chariot, he could hear the man reading

aloud from the scroll of Isaiah. He was reading the prophecy of the suffering servant (Isaiah 53). Philip asked if he could help him to understand the passage. Just like Jesus shared with the men on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24), Philip began at that place in the Old Testament scripture and preached to him about Jesus. The man gladly received the message and understood that he indeed had a future and a hope for eternity. He asked to be baptized. When he and Philip came up out of the water, Philip was immediately taken to his next preaching assignment. Luke says that the eunuch rejoiced all the way home. I can remember summer camp kids drawing a picture of this scene during their Bible study time. One little girl drew two scenes of this baptism. She said the first one was before he went into the water and the second one was after he came up out of the water. The first one had a sad face. The second one had a happy face. That says it all.

December is our month dedicated to the gathering of offerings to support foreign missionaries. I pray that your church will be a part of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Our theme is "Are We There Yet?" I used to ask my dad if we would ever get Lottie Moon paid off and he said not as long as one person still needs to know Jesus. We can't let our missionaries do all the work because we are missionaries, too. We must seize each moment to share our faith with others.

October 2005, Dr. Jim Futral told the "Hurricane Katrina" Mississippi Baptist Convention that Acts 1:8 must become Acts 8:1 if we expect to see folks reached for Christ. Persecution because of Christ sends folks out to saturate their world for Christ. To sample His grace, we must first see His face and then seek our place. Go. Tell.

Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Where Compromise Takes You

1 Kings 11:1-13

By Dr. W. Wayne VanHorn

Last week our lesson encouraged us to worship Jesus as the King of king. One aspect of Jesus' life that makes Him so unique is how He never compromised God's will for His life. The goal of this week's lesson is to understand the effects of compromise and to guard against spiritual compromise in our own lives. The lesson is set against the backdrop of God's full blessings on Solomon (1 Kings 9:10-10:29). God gave Solomon great wealth, good health, unsurpassed wisdom, and keen shrewdness in human affairs. Solomon became the envy of the world surrounding his kingdom. God answered in full measure Solomon's prayer, which he uttered at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:6-14). God had empowered Solomon to succeed at being a holy and righteous king. Solomon had it made, or did he?

In every relationship, people act and react to their partner. Unfortunately, sometimes they go outside the relationship to interact with another partner. Solomon and the LORD were in a covenant relationship, promised by God to David, ratified by Solomon at Gibeon, and blessed by the LORD throughout Solomon's life. Unfortunately, Solomon went outside the relationship and "loved many foreign women" from nations the LORD had forbidden His people to intermarry (1 Kings 11:1-2; NIV). Predictably, "his wives led him astray" (1 Kings 11:3; NIV). Interestingly, the Hebrew term natah, rendered led...astray, carries the idea of "stretching" or "inclining." Solomon's foreign wives did just that! They stretched his thinking to include an acceptance of their idolatry, then they inclined his



VanHorn

heart to worship their gods. What a slap in the LORD's face.

According to 1 Kings 11:4, Solomon's wives "turned his heart after other gods" as he "grew old." Is old age an excuse for turning away from God? Never! I have been blessed to know some of God's choicest saints, who are still serving Him well into their 90's and 100's. Solomon's problem was not one of age, but rather of a divided heart. He gave part of his heart to the LORD and part to the gods of his wives, no doubt to placate them. Unfortunately, as with all important relationships, Solomon's heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God. The Hebrew text uses the term salem, meaning "to be safe, complete, at peace," to say Solomon's heart was not salem with the LORD his God. The final line of this verse foreshadows the problematic developments that attended Solomon's death. Solomon did not measure up to his father David in

the matter of serving the LORD with a complete heart.

Every relationship suffers when one partner is unfaithful. Solomon had become unfaithful to the LORD, who had blessed him with wisdom, wealth, health, and long life. The breadth of Solomon's sin is outlined in 1 Kings 11:5-8. Solomon followed false gods: Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians; Molech, the "detestable god of the Ammonites;" and Chemosh, the "detestable god of Moab. We are told Solomon "did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods" (1 Kings 11:8; NIV). From the perspective of his relationship to God, 1 Kings 11:6a sums the matter up precisely, "Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD."

Sin carries a penalty. Understandably, the LORD became angry with Solomon. Note the relational reaction on the LORD's part. Solomon sinned by turning his heart toward false gods; the LORD reacted in anger because Solomon's heart "had turned away from the LORD" (1 Kings 11:9). God's anger was justified

based on His prior two appearances to Solomon. On those occasions, the LORD promised the blessings of obedience to His word and the judgments that would attend disobedience (1 Kings 3:14; 2 Chronicles 7:17-22). God explicitly commanded Solomon not to turn away his heart to follow other gods, "but Solomon did not do what the LORD had commanded" (1 Kings 11:10; NIV). In response to Solomon's sin, the LORD made another promise to him, this time a somber pledge to tear the kingdom away from him and give it to his servant (1 Kings 11:11). That promise was fulfilled when Jeroboam, servant of Solomon, became king over the ten northern tribes, leaving Solomon's son Rehoboam with a much truncated kingdom.

What about us? Will we allow society's temptations to stretch our thinking to the point of acceptance of sinful behavior? Such gradual accommodation usually results in full inclination to sin.

Van Horn is Dean of Christian Studies and the Arts at Mississippi College.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Focus on Jesus

Luke 2:1-35

By Becky Brown

Our family received the same tender gift every Christmas. After we opened presents, Dad would pick up his preacher Bible. That well-worn King James Version of the scriptures would fall open in his lap and land smack dab on Luke chapter two, our passage for this week's lesson. He would read about Mary and Joseph and a town called Bethlehem and angels and shepherds and (reading from Matthew one and two) wise men and two stars, one shining in the sky and One wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger. I was nearly a teenager before I realized that "LO" was not the name of the angel of the Lord. I guarantee you that those initially terrified shepherds thought the angelic flight pattern was way too "close" for comfort OR joy.

Those unsuspecting sheep herders were minding their own sheep-keeping business that night in Bethlehem. The angels started the whole thing. Then there was the star and the excitement and the message about some child in a manger. They could not contain themselves. They left their own sheep in the fields to locate the Little Lamb of God who had been born to be the Shepherd of all trusting souls. These shepherds will forever represent those who come and see and hear the message of Jesus and depart with the full intention of sharing it with others.

I have stood on the shepherd hills of Bethlehem under that glorious night sky. I have come to understand that we believers are to be the shepherds IN the story and shepherds OF the story. Those who have received



Brown

the child in the manger have the responsibility of shepherding this news to a lost and dying world. Shepherds were outcasts of society, the most unlikely folks of all to be receiving personal invitations from angels. Of course, God knew exactly what He

was doing with such an amazing birth announcement. Beginning with the shepherds, He was inviting everyone to come and share in the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to ALL the people." This is the gospel: Outcasts do not have to be castaways. Our sin separated us from God. The birth of Jesus brings us near. Come. Live.

Eight centuries before the birth of Christ, Isaiah prophesied that His name would be called Emmanuel, which means "God with us." Always true to His own word, God came near. His name is Jesus. Peace on Earth! Good will! Good news! God is wearing baby shoes! Folks near-

by "wondered" at what the shepherds had told them. Some surely believed their message while others probably thought they were just crazy old smelly shepherds. Remember that when you share the message with a joyful receiver as well as with a mocking rejector.

Don't miss Christmas. Pick up that baby in the manger and wrap Him tightly inside the swaddling clothes of your soul. Don't allow the glow of the star to fade in the dark night of your current crisis. Look upward and blanket that sky with praises just as the angels filled it to capacity with their cries of joy. Find a reason to bring your gift of worship and take your place with the wise men. Don't you dare depart from that spot in that oh, so little town of Bethlehem until you have sat beside Mary and pondered all these things in your heart. You are the "innkeeper" of the room inside your soul. You get to invite Jesus in or turn him away with a no vacancy sign.

In Sierra Leone, West Africa, people speak the language of

Krio. In that culture, wise men are called "Sense Men" and disciples are called "Learnin' Boys." I pray that we urgently desire to be both. Let us first have sense enough to come to the manger and worship and finally the willingness to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn. Focus on Jesus. May I close with my Beatitude for Christmas 2010?

Blessed are the Roman Imperial Census Takers, the no-room-in-the-inn keepers, the obviously oblivious Bethlehem citizens, the heavenly angelic choir members, the stinky old shepherds, the wandering star gazers, the confused barn animals, Joseph and his line of the tribe of Judah standing faithfully beside Mary and her Little Lamb, Who, with the eyes of God, was tenderly watching over them all. From His eternal perspective, peeking through the swaddling clothes, they shall forever be called...Manger Seen.

Brown is staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Worship the King of Kings!

Matthew 1:20b-23; 2:1-11

By Dr. W. Wayne VanHorn

We move our focus from the kings in the Old Testament to the King of all kings, Jesus Christ. The goal of this week's lesson is to encourage everyone to worship Jesus as the King of kings. The lesson is set against the backdrop of the angelic visit to Joseph (Matt. 1:20b-23) and the visit of the Magi from the east (Matt. 2:1-11). Matthew was inspired by the Holy Spirit to clarify for his readers that Jesus was miraculously conceived (Matt. 1:20b). The angel instructed Joseph to name the baby Jesus because "He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21; NIV).

The name "Jesus" derives from the same word as the verb "save" in Hebrew, *Yeshua'* and *yasha'*, respectively. Basically, the angel told Joseph to name the baby "Salvation" because "He will save His people from

their sins." Matthew also wanted to show Jesus' entrance into this world was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Matt. 1:22-23; Isa. 7:14).

Unfortunately, so many skeptics have doubted the virgin birth, they have failed to get the point of this prophecy, namely "God is with us," the literal meaning of *Immanuel*. Matthew closed his gospel on the same note, recording Jesus' words, "surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20b; NIV). God's people should worship Jesus as the King of kings because He is with us! Joseph, convinced by the angelic dream, married Mary and named the baby Jesus.

At this point, Matthew focused on the visit of the Magi from the east, presumably somewhere in the region of modern day Iran or Iraq,



VanHorn

though no specific place is mentioned. Travelers from the east followed the Fertile Crescent with its fresh water supplies and well marked trade routes, and therefore entered the promised land from the north. Since Bethlehem is located 5 miles south of Jerusalem, we can understand why the Magi assumed Jerusalem was their destination. The little town of Bethlehem was hidden by the larger city of Jerusalem. Additionally, Herod the Great, the king at the time, had a palace in Jerusalem. Surely, the next "King of the Jews" would be found in Herod's fortress.

The Magi indicated they had come to worship Him (Matt. 2:2; NIV). The Greek word for worship, *proskuneo*, means to "do obeisance to" or "to worship" and is used often of a god. Since Jesus was "God with us," the wise men's actions were appropriate.

Matthew does not indicate why the Magi referred to Jesus

as the "King of the Jews," but the title served Matthew well in declaring to his fellow Jews that Jesus was their Messiah-King. Ironically, the title used of Jesus shortly after His birth, would be nailed on a titulus above His head as He hung on the cross (Matt. 27:37). Jesus deserves to be worshiped as King of kings and Lord of lords because He died for the sins of the whole world.

What about the star they followed? Many interpreters try to limit the identification of the star to fixed phenomena like the alignment of planets or a passing comet. I believe God prepared a special, "one of a kind" sign in the heavens to announce the arrival of His special, "one of a kind" Son. Herod no doubt saw the star, but only became "deeply disturbed" when the Magi connected the star to the birth of a new King (Matt. 2:3).

Herod was an Idumean, not a Jew, and he consequently was ignorant of many of the Jewish prophecies, including the Messiah's birthplace. His chief priests and scribes referred him

to Micah 5:2, a passage promising a leader from Bethlehem who would shepherd God's people (Matt. 2:5-6). Again, Matthew demonstrated the coming of Jesus as a fulfillment of prophecy. Armed with this knowledge, Herod instructed the Magi to go find the child and then to bring him word, so he too could "worship" (proskuneo) Him (Matt. 2:8).

Matthew related when the Magi arrived in Bethlehem they found "the child" (paidion) in "the house" (oikia). Luke directed the shepherds (Luke 2:12) to "the baby" (brephos) in "the manger" (phatne). The differing terminology between Matthew and Luke indicates the visit of the Magi occurred sometime after the visit of the shepherds. At any rate, once the Magi found Jesus they fell to their knees and worshiped (proskuneo) Him. Their elaborate gifts were appropriate for the King of kings.

Van Horn is Dean of Christian Studies and the Arts at Mississippi College.

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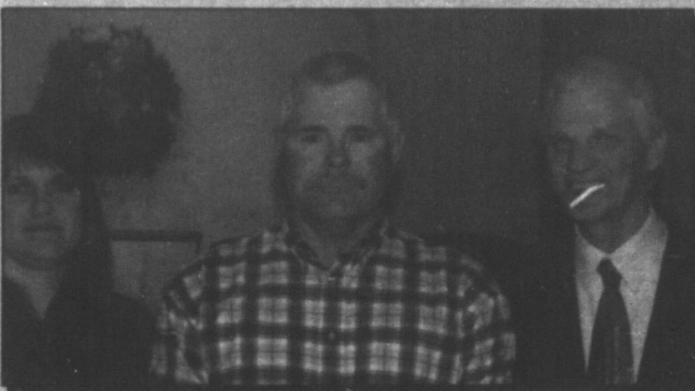
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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mcb.org.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Allen ordination



2. Fellowship Church, Ellisville



3. Calvary Church, Columbia



4. Knight licensing

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MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

1. Juniper Grove Church, Poplarville, ordained Robert Allen as deacon Dec. 5. Shown are Jeanne Allen, Allen, and pastor Breaux Tageant.
2. Fellowship Church, Ellisville, held youth Sunday Dec. 5. Youth led portions of the service and assisted in others. Shown are the youth with youth directors Dennis and Audra Sandford.
3. Calvary Church, Columbia, presented their children's Christmas musical, Follow the Star, Dec. 5, under the direction of Vicky Stringer and Debbie Lamison. Shown are the participants.
4. New Home Church, Fulton, licensed Kelly Wayne Knight to the gospel ministry Nov. 21. Shown are Knight, Stacey Knight, Clay Knight, Addie Belle Knight, and pastor Michael Warren.
5. First Church, Guntown, ordained Danny Lindsey as deacon. Shown are Charlie Magees, Lindsey, and pastor Bobby Robbins.
6. Bolton Church, Bolton, held a veterans appreciation day recently. Shown are MSG Michael Ellis (present); Bryson Banes (future), and SSGT Carroll Garrett (past).
7. East Moss Point Church, Moss Point held a WMU ladies luncheon recently, with 70 guests attending the event. Guest speaker Jan Hoobyar presented a portrayal of the woman at the well, and Shondae Nassar sang Fill My Cup, Lord.
8. Antioch Church, Brandon, will present the adult choir Christmas musical O Holy Night Dec. 19, 10:30 a.m. and the children's musical Signs of Christmas at 6 p.m.
9. Steven T. Reed of Family Vision Clinic, Inc. of Magee, and a deacon at Goodwater Church, Magee, has been named Mississippi's Optometrist of the Year by the

Mississippi Optometric Association (MOA) to recognize significant contributions to the profession of optometry and the general public. Reed received the James P. Brownlee O.D. of the Year Award at the MOA's annual fall meeting

in Jackson recently. The award is given to an optometrist who provides outstanding service for patient care and to the profession of optometry at the state and national level.



5. Lindsey ordination



6. Bolton Church, Bolton

STAFF CHANGES

Rob Robbins has accepted the position of part-time minister of music at Bethesda Church, Terry. He has previously served several churches in Mississippi full-time, including Monticello Church, Hernando Church, and Wildwood Church, Clinton. He is married to Donna Maze Robbins of Columbus and has two grown children. Robbins is a graduate of Mississippi College.

OBITUARY

Maribelle Cummings Jones, died Nov. 26 in Longview, Tex. Born May 21, 1905, her funeral was at the Memphis Funeral Home, Memphis, Dec. 4. She was manager of the Baptist Book Store (now LifeWay) in Jackson, from 1934 until 1970. During her years as manager, the store moved into a new building and the staff increased from three to 30. She was a member of First Church, Memphis and was library director for 28 years. She moved to Longview in 2003. She was preceded in death by her parents, Thomas and Cora Cummings, and her husband, Otis Moore Jones. She is survived by her niece and nephew, Dr. and Mrs. William A. Rawlings, Longview; nieces, Margaret McLeskey, Beverly Houston, Nelda McCune, and Mary Sue Lancaster; great-nephew, James McLeskey, Richmond, Va., and great-nieces Amy McLeskey, Janet Morrow, Kathleen Green, and Mary Helen Kelm.